

DANCE/NYC TESTIFIES ON THE CITY'S BUDGET FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

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Testimony to the New York City Council on the FY 2016 Budget for Cultural Affairs

Submitted by Lane Harwell, Executive Director of Dance/NYC

Dance/NYC is united with its colleagues, [New York City Arts Coalition](#) and [One Percent for Culture](#) and the broader cultural community in asking for a \$30 million increase in funding for the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) for FY 2016. (It also supports the City Council's proposal to increase arts education funding to the Department of Education by \$4.6 million.)

Dance/NYC's case for increased funding for DCLA is grounded in its core values of equity and inclusion. The increased allocation would advance equity in the delivery of resources by allowing the department to include previously unfunded groups in its portfolio and to help currently funded groups scale up their delivery of public value. As a result, it would enable the arts and culture to better serve more New Yorkers in more of our geographies and contribute to a more fair and equitable New York.

Dance/NYC's three most recent research reports recommend potential uses for increased DCLA funds. First, [Emergency Preparedness and Response](#) (2014), based on lessons learned from Superstorm Sandy, advocates investment now in preparedness measures to increase the resilience of DCLA-funded groups in the face of future disasters, as well as their capacity for increasing the resilience of all New Yorkers. The research offers evidence for how investing now would save the City later, and encourages attention to the smallest of DCLA-funded groups and those in geographies most vulnerable to natural disasters

A second report, [State of NYC Dance and Corporate Giving](#) (2014), based on a Cultural Data Project data sample, reveals declining business support of dance totaling 62% over five years. In doing so, it encourages City leadership to invest in strengthening ties between the cultural and business communities and to increase public-private funding partnerships. DCLA-funded groups in the \$500,000-\$999,999 budget range have experienced the most substantial losses from the corporate sector and warrant targeted attention. (Read what [Crain's New York Business](#) says about the research.)

Dance/NYC's newest report, [Discovering Disability: Data and NYC Dance](#) (2015), recommends funding centered on art making with disabled artists and improved facilities, communications, and programs access for the City's more than 800,000 disabled residents. The research, part of broader initiative coordinated closely with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and New York City Department of Education, also advocates interagency investment that considers lives in dance on a continuum, beginning with Pre-K public school classrooms. This 25th anniversary year of the Americans with Disabilities Act is a time to not simply acknowledge progress made to address accessibility gaps for disabled people. It is also a time to recognize there is still significant work to be done and to implement effective solutions. (Please join Dance/NYC on July 8 for a full day conference, [Disability.Dance.Artistry.](#), focused on solutions. Details available on the [Dance/NYC site](#).)

With its [disability initiative](#), Dance/NYC is acting on its core values of equity and inclusion by spotlighting one significant population of many that have been historically excluded from the arts and culture, as is the case with society at large. In doing so, it joins many colleague advocates mission-focused on equity issues whose advocacy should be welcomed this budget season, from its initiative partners, Arts Beyond Sight and Inclusion in the Arts, to Elders Share the Arts and the Cultural Equity Group, which has proposed funding targeted to arts and cultural activity in communities of color. (Visit the [Dance/NYC site](#) for a recent public discussion of cultural equity among colleague arts advocates.)

Dance/NYC's vision for a future where the arts really are for all can only be realized by increased City funding and the DCLA's partnership with New Yorkers in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to access. These are tasks achievable through the department's diversity initiative announced in January and cultural planning legislated by the City Council this April, and Dance/NYC looks forward to supporting the department in any way possible in these efforts.

In requesting increased funding for DCLA, Dance/NYC acknowledges and thanks the City Council for its commitment to arts and culture and to making New York City more fair and equitable for all New Yorkers.

For more on why dance and culture matter to New Yorkers in all 51 City Council districts, experience Dance/NYC's NEW YORKERS FOR DANCE campaign at [DanceNYC.nyc](#).

Sample Testimony from Dance/NYC Constituents

"Infinity Dance Theater has been a frequent fundee of DCA. Over the past few years, funding has been cut depending on their budget. A \$30,000,000.00 budget increase spread over the cultural institutions receiving funding would mean increased access to the arts and culture for New Yorkers with disabilities. I, for one, as the Artistic Director of Infinity Dance Theater would devote additional funding to our teacher-training program. More New York City dance educators need training to properly teach students using wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Much is done for students with developmental and behavioral disabilities, but very little is available for students with mobility issues. Lately there has been a great deal of talk about Universal Dance for Every Child. Additional funding would really help to make this goal a reality."

- Kitty Lunn, Artistic Director, Infinity Dance Theater

"Although I have ceased making new work, due to the paucity of funding, the trend I see in young choreographers is toward seeking for mentoring. The quality of exploration and experimentation can only be enhanced by increased support for risk-taking on the part of makers and their ability to engage professional 'third eyes' to mentor their work in progress. Because of limited budgets, too much work is rushed to the stage before it has had time to marinate. A program of funding for professional mentors —veteran dance makers and writers—would help

increase the quality of concert dance in the region."

- Gus Solomons jr., PARADIGM-nyc

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